

Lewiston & Community Partners Compete for Universally Accessible Playground

PRESS RELEASE: July 29, 2011

"Would you write an essay?" was the question that caught the attention of City of Lewiston staff upon receiving a Shane's Inspiration contest postcard in regards to winning a universally accessible playground. The mission of Shane's Inspiration is to create inclusive playgrounds and programs that unite children of all abilities.

The Lewiston City Council endorsed a municipal contest entry at their July 19, 2011, meeting, and Lewiston proceeded to advocate for a **"playground of abilities"** for both children and adults with and without disabilities.

If Lewiston wins, the city would be home to \$100,000 worth of inclusive Landscape Structures playground equipment and \$50,000 in project development, design services, and comprehensive "Together We Are Able" educational curriculum—the latter to be used by Lewiston Public Schools. If Lewiston wins, it will be the first Shane's Inspiration playground established in the Northeast.

Over the last month, Lewiston and numerous community partners brainstormed as to how a universally accessible playground would benefit area children. Priorities for Lewiston's playground would be **inclusiveness, accessibility, visibility, safety, and room for expansion.**

Entities that are on board with Lewiston's quest for the playground are *Androscoggin Head Start & Child Care; Sandcastle Clinical & Educational Services; Childhood Development Services - First Step; Lewiston Police Department; The Margaret Murphy Center for Children; Maine Division for the Blind & Visually Impaired Orientation & Mobility Specialists; The Visible Community; Lewiston Public Schools; Ben & Erin Hayes; Healthy Androscoggin;*

Special Olympics; and Central Maine Heart & Vascular Institute.

Community Relations Coordinator Dottie Perham-Whittier notes, ***"In a month's time, community members have united efforts to convey a collective desire for an inclusive playground where all children and families can play together with equipment that is age and developmentally appropriate."***

Lewiston Director of Recreation Maggie Chisholm adds, ***"This is a wonderful opportunity for Lewiston children and children county wide. It is so encouraging that the playground would be barrier free on every level from youth to adults. In addition, should Lewiston win the inclusive playground, we hope to eventually expand it into a site for four-season play."***

Lewiston's entry packet, which was uploaded this date to a Shane's Inspiration contest link, included a 1,000 word essay that focuses on overall project vision, reasons why Lewiston needs an inclusive playground, a description of community partners/how they will contribute to the project's successful completion, and what Lewiston anticipates this project's community impact and longevity to be. In addition to the Lewiston City Council resolution, the entry also includes **11 letters** of support from community partners; related photos such as Ben Hayes, who has been living with a spinal cord injury since 2007, playing with his daughter; and posters supporting the playground entry drawn by children attending Lewiston Recreation's Camp Smiles.

Lewiston's entry also includes a **YouTube video link**, with the video demonstrating community support for the inclusive playground. The video can be found on **YouTube** at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5Q4dUIV is>.

In mid August, Lewiston will learn if it is one of ten finalists for the \$150,000 grand prize. On or around September 2nd, Lewiston will learn if it is indeed the grand prize winner. In addition to the grand prize winner, five regional applicants will receive \$10,000 in playground equipment and \$50,000 in development, design, and curriculum. Lewiston is part of the region consisting of Maine, Connecticut,

Deleware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Shane's Inspiration was co-founded in 1998 by Catherine Curry Williams and Scott Williams in memory of their son Shane Alexander. Shane's Inspiration has evolved into a widely recognized, international nonprofit creating universally accessible playgrounds and programs that integrate children of all abilities socially, physically, and emotionally and fostering acceptance, friendship, and understanding. To date, 36 playgrounds have been created, 3 in conjunction with the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic - Paralympic Games, as well as the first accessible playground in the country of Mexico.

Shane's Inspiration and Landscape Structures have collaborated for more than 10 years in bringing such playgrounds and programs to communities. A pioneer in inclusive play, Landscape Structures develops play activities for the full spectrum of children with disabilities.

For additional information on the universally accessible playground contest, www.shanesinspiration.org